TED NATIONS

Daily Highlights

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TUESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

* Security Council holds Ministerial Meeting to commemorate fiftieth anniversary of United Nations; reaffirms its commitment to maintenance of international peace and security.

* Secretary-General says Security Council has been functioning more flexibly and creatively than ever before; notes interactive and dynamic relationship with Secretariat.

* United Nations cannot afford peace-keeping operations in former Yugoslavia, Secretary-General says.

* Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Federal Republic of Yugoslavia reach agreement providing for free, fair and direct elections in Bosnia.

* United Nations must continue to improve mechanisms to protect human rights while maintaining universal standards, Russian Federation tells General Assembly.

* United Kingdom warns United Nations is on verge of financial collapse and needs new financing arrangements; says disengagement and disorder cost more than peace-keeping.

* Japan proposes new development strategy based on realistic targets, broad-based participation and increased South-South cooperation.

* International community must act urgently and effectively to revitalize growth in least developed countries, Secretary-General tells Intergovernmental Meeting on LDCs.

* Secretary-General calls for elimination of land-mines once and for all; says use and production should be banned and stockpiles destroyed.

* Donors attending UNDP meeting in Brussels pledge $500 million for peace process and development in Angola.

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The Security Council met today at the level of Foreign Ministers to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations and to exchange views on the challenges which the Council faced. In a statement by its President, Susanna Agnelli (Italy), the Council said it had played a crucial role in the maintenance of international peace and security, on which development and cooperation among nations were based.

The past few years had been ones of momentous change, bringing fresh hope and new challenges, the statement continued. Operations mandated by the Council had helped to restore peace and stability to countries plagued by war. Although such operations had largely been successful, there were areas where success had not been achieved. The Council must continue to spare no effort in working for the maintenance of international peace and security, and build on its experiences of past and existing operations.

The Council recognized that the challenges facing the international community demanded a resolute response, based on the principles and purposes of the Charter. The United Nations must be strengthened and revitalized to help meet those challenges. Members noted the conclusions of the General Assembly's Working Group on the Security Council, among them, that the Council should be expanded and its working methods reviewed, in a way that strengthened its capacity and effectiveness, enhanced its representative character and improved its efficiency and transparency, and that important differences existed on key issues.

"The members of the Security Council reaffirm their commitment to the collective security system of the Charter," the statement concluded. "On the solemn occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, the Council, along with other United Nations bodies, commemorates what has been achieved so far, but also commits itself once again to the maintenance of international peace and security for which it has primary responsibility, and to working to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war."

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The Security Council has been functioning more flexibly, continuously and creatively than ever before, Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali told today's Ministerial Meeting of the Council. Along with its more traditional responses in resolving conflicts, he said, the Council had taken pioneering positions on sanctions, preventive deployment, international war crimes tribunals, confidence-building and democratization. The work had often been frustrating, but the

The Council's performance should inspire all who made decisions in an age of ambiguity and change.

The ever-increasing and varied agenda of the Security Council had placed new demands on the Secretariat, which was itself adapting to new realities, the Secretary-General continued. He stressed his determination to make the Secretariat more effective in carrying out the tasks assigned to it by the Council. For several years, the Council had succeeded in achieving consensus on most of its decisions. At the same time, the relationship between the Secretariat and the Council had become more interactive and dynamic. The two must continue to work together to improve their methods and their actions.

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During his meetings with Ministers yesterday and today, the Secretary-General emphasized the critical nature of United Nations finances, and "how absolutely essential it is that the UN get out of the former Yugoslavia," according to a spokesman. Peace-keeping operations in the region were costing $5 million a day and could not be sustained, he said. In contrast, the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL) cost $25 million a year.

Member States owed the United Nations a total of $3.59 billion as of 15 September, the spokesman reported. Almost $850 million was owed to the regular budget and $2.74 billion was for peace-keeping. The United States -- the largest debtor -- owed nearly $530 million to the regular budget and $1.05 billion to peace-keeping. The Russian Federation owed more than $20 million to the regular budget and $570 million to peace-keeping.

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At a meeting at Headquarters today, representatives of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) reached an agreement providing for free, fair and direct elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Bosnian Foreign Minister Muhamed Sacirbey told correspondents that he was cautiously optimistic regarding the implementation of the agreement. He said assurances had been given that the elections would not be based on standards imposed by dictators and war criminals.

Bosnia and Herzegovina would not settle for sham elections dictated by despots to undermine democracy under the cover of an international peace agreement, Mr. Sacirbey continued. The success of the negotiating process would be measured by whether or not war criminals were brought to justice and dictators swept out of power, not by paper agreements signed by such dictators and criminals. He added that elections could not be free, fair or democratic until basic respect for human rights was established and war criminals were tried by the International Tribunal.

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The United Nations must continue to improve mechanisms for the protection of human rights, primarily by strengthening its control and preventive functions, according to Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev. In an address to the General Assembly today, he stressed the importance of single standards in the area of human rights and basic democratic institutions. Citing the dangers posed by fascism, racism and religious extremism, he said the international community must not tolerate the emergence of double standards. The Assembly should take action during the current session on such issues as the struggle against racism, all forms of xenophobia and aggressive nationalism, ensuring the rights of minorities, and the promotion of democracy and the rule of law in countries in transition.

The policy of single standards must also apply to the sphere of peace-keeping, Mr. Kozyrev continued. "Justice without force is powerless while force without justice is tyrannical," he said. It was necessary to radically improve United Nations peace-keeping, with close linkage between peace-keeping operations and efforts to peacefully settle conflicts, and better planning, command and control. The United Nations should be actively involved in the development of a new model of general and comprehensive security for Europe. It should also take urgent measures on the prevention of illicit trafficking of light firearms and proliferation of anti-personnel mines. He called for a universal and permanent moratorium on nuclear tests, with a view to concluding a comprehensive test-ban treaty by 1996.

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The United Nations is on the verge of financial collapse, and its financing arrangements must be changed, United Kingdom Foreign Secretary Malcom Rifkind told the General Assembly today. Noting that 39 Member States had made no payments to the Organization last year, he said penalties should be tightened for non-payment and interest charged on late payments. "Perhaps an appropriate policy could best be entitled no representation without taxation," he stated. At the same time, some Members paid too much. The scale of assessments should be simplified, and should reflect a country's real capacity to pay.

The world needed a strong, effective United Nations and the cost was not high, he continued. Multilateral action was not an add-on to national policy; it gave wider legitimacy to such valued principles as human rights and democracy. The bill for all United Nations peace-keeping, aid and development operations in 1994 equaled 3.5 per cent of the United States defense budget. One day of Operation Desert Storm cost as much as the year's peace-keeping. "The price of disengagement and disorder would be greater," he concluded. "Public support is there. Even in the United States, polls are clear: people support the UN; they support international peace-keeping. We have a duty to our electorates to continue the UN's work."

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In his address to the Assembly, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan, Yohei Kono, stressed the importance of development, conflict prevention and disarmament. He proposed a new development strategy with three major guidelines: the establishment of realistic targets; the promotion of participatory development, involving central and local governments and non-governmental organizations; and the promotion of "South-South" cooperation, including the establishment of an effective mechanism for that purpose within the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Mr. Kono deplored recent nuclear tests and said disarmament efforts must be redoubled. Japan intended to sponsor a draft resolution calling for the cessation of nuclear testing during the Assembly's current session, as well as a draft resolution on the establishment of a panel of experts to address the issue of the proliferation of small arms. He reiterated Japan's readiness to discharge its responsibilities as a permanent member of the Security Council, and urged all Member States to redouble their efforts to reach an agreement on a broad framework for United Nations reform by September 1996.

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The international community must act urgently and effectively to halt social and economic decline and revitalize growth in the least developed countries (LDCs), according to Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali. In a statement to the Intergovernmental Meeting on the Mid-Term Global Review of the Implementation of the Programme of Action for LDCs for the 1990s, he said a lack of external support was a key reason why the hopes of the 1990 Paris Declaration had not materialized.

Mr. Boutros-Ghali set out five broad objectives for international action: the debt burden must be lifted; there must be greater financial flows to LDCs; those countries must have greater access to markets and better terms of trade; commercial investment in them must be encouraged; and an adequate infrastructure for development must be put in place. A stronger sense of purpose -- and partnership -- was now required, he added.

Participants in the opening session elected Norwegian Minister of Development Cooperation Kari Nordheim as President of the Meeting. She announced that Norway would contribute an extra $10 million to the UNDP Trust Fund for Good Governance. It would also give high priority to the issue of population growth, allocating at least four per cent of development assistance to population programmes.

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The Secretary-General today called for the elimination of land-mines once and for all. In a videotaped message to the high-level segment of the Review Conference of States Parties to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons

in Vienna, he said the use and production of land-mines should be banned and stockpiles destroyed.

Land-mines killed or wounded more than 20,000 people every year, the Secretary-General noted. Most of those people were not combatants, but were farmers, women or children. Meanwhile, the situation was worsening -- 100,000 land-mines were cleared every year but 2 to 5 million more were laid. He appealed to all States to ratify or accede to the Convention and its Protocols.

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Donors meeting in Brussels yesterday pledged some $500 million for the peace process and development in Angola, and more pledges were expected today, according to the UNDP. President Jose Eduardo dos Santos of Angola and the leader of the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), Jonas Savimbi, used the occasion to reiterate their support for the consolidation of peace in their country.

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